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ABSTRACT

The Materials Analysis Inventory is designed to assist educators in determining the appropriateness of instructional materials for particular students. This instrument consists of a grid displaying sets of characteristics identified by classroom teachers, curriculum evaluators, and specialists in the education of minority students as important in instructional materials. The inventory may be used to examine commercially published material as well as material that has been locally developed. Desirable features of both teacher's manuals and student texts are included. The Materials Analysis Inventory provides a means for determining the presence and frequency, or the absence, of features considered imperative for the instruction of language minority students, such as cultural relevance of the context used and attention to language development issues. In addition, the instrument includes content urged by recent innovations in curriculum frameworks for all students, such as the development of thinking skills. Use of the Materials Analysis Inventory results in a profile of the materials' strengths and weaknesses. (The inventory with instructions is appended.) (Author/MSE)

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SELECTING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS FOR LANGUAGE MINORITY STUDENTS: A MATERIALS ANALYSIS INVENTORY

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ER17

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Abstract

The Materials Analysis Inventory is intended to assist educators in determining the appropriateness of instructional materials for particular students. This instrument consists of sets of characteristics that have been identified by classroom teachers, curriculum evaluators and specialists in the education of minority students, as important in instructional material. The Materials Analysis Inventory may be used to examine commercially published material as well that which has been locally developed. Desirable features of Teachers' Manuals as well as of student books are included. This tool provides a way to determine the presence or absence of content considered imperative for the instruction of language minority students, such as cultural relevance of the context used and attention to language development issues. In addition, the instrument includes content urged by recent innovations in curriculum frameworks for all students, such as the development of thinking skills.

The user fills out a grid indicating the presence and frequency (or absence) of characteristics applicable to particular learners and specific subject areas. The resultant analysis is a profile with strengths and weaknesses of the material that has been examined.

Selecting Instructional Materials for Language Minority Students:

A Materials Analysis Inventory

A formal way to analyze educational materials has long been needed in the schools. In this country, State Departments of Education, through textbook evaluation committees, generally determine which commercially published books meet their criteria for use in that state's public schools. Such textbooks become known as the "state adopted series," eligible to be purchased by state funds. However, another stage of selection is generally necessary before books find their way into a classroom. Most state adoption lists usually contain several alternative series for each subject area and the decision of which textbooks to use in a particular classroom is usually determined at the district level, or perhaps at the school site. Local selection allows the school site educators a closer fit of instructional materials to their students' needs. With the recognition that the ethnic and linguistic diversity in our schools requires attention to specific learning needs, this local determination of which material to use has become critical.

Rationale

Curiously, although the textbook becomes the teaching guide for many teachers, preservice training seldom includes evaluation of instructional materials. University courses in educational psychology can be expected to include extensive discussion on the need to be aware of individual differences, and the importance of correct analysis of the particular abilities of each student. (Glover, & Brunning, 1987).

University textbooks on curriculum and instruction are covering the importance of activating students' previous knowledge, relevant schema, prior to a learning activity (McNiel, 1985). Further, once these teachers are in the field, and especially if they are faculty members of innovative schools, they are provided with in-service professional development that includes new approaches to instruction. With respect to the teaching of language minority students, a concern frequently voiced by teachers is that text books are not up to date or that they are not appropriate for their students (Passsow, A.H, 1989).

The Materials Analysis Inventory (see Appendix) was developed to serve the classroom teacher or district level administrator in analyzing materials already in the classroom or that are being considered for adoption at the district or school site. The instrument might also be used by anyone wishing to systematically review educational materials. While the basis for the instrument has been educational needs of language minority students, textbooks and other instructional materials for the general student population can also be examined by the Material Analysis Inventory.

Features of the Instrument

This instrument consists of sets of characteristics that have been identified by classroom teachers, curriculum evaluators, and minority education specialists to be important in instructional materials. Because not every characteristic may be pertinent for every subject area, however, provisions have been made for the user to indicate that such a category of items is not applicable for the particular material under scrutiny. For example, a mathematics textbook series may include

some of the items under the section VIII, "Language Development," but may exclude others, such as "Writing from Dictation," and "Writing Summaries," (p.4 of the Materials Analysis Inventory).

This instrument makes provision for assessing the teachers' manuals as well as student texts. In addition to assessing the general components of materials, such as scope and sequence, clarity of text, accuracy of content, gender, religious, and racial bias, which should have been caught by the State level committee, this instrument includes other concepts critical to the instruction of language minority students, such as cultural relevance, language development, and critical thinking skills. Further, it alerts the teacher to the materials' adaptability to different learning styles.

The user marks a grid according to the presence or absence of the features and of the frequency with which the feature can be found. The analysis will result in a profile of the particular material to the specific characteristics considered important by the user for the intended student population.

We have recommended a way to compute the materials' ratings. However, we suggest educators adapt the rating system to best suit their particular purposes.

Appropriate application of this tool is dependent on the following factors: (1) the depth of acquaintance of the user with the instructional material being examined, (2) the level of knowledge that educator has of educational theory and implementation issues pertinent to the school site/school district in question and (3) the educational responses the material is intended to assist.

References

Passow, A. H. (1989). Curriculum and Instruction in Chapter 1 Programs: A Look Back and a Look Ahead. Trends and Issues No. 11. New York, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College, Columbia University.

McNiel, J. D. (1985). Curriculum, A Comprehensive Introducation, 3rd Edition. Boston, MA: Little Brown.

Glover, J. A. & Bruning, R. H. (1987). Educational Psychology, Principles and Applications, Second Edition. Boston, MA: Little Brown.

APPENDIX

MATERIALS ANALYSIS INVENTORY

Center for Language Education and Research

Materials Analysis Inventory

Concepción M. Valadez and Clementina P. Gregoire

General Instructions: Either a pen or pencil may be used to complete this questionnaire. Most of the questions may be answered by simply placing an X in the appropriate box. However, you may write in additional comments whenever you wish to do so.

Specific Instructions:

Select a textbook with its corresponding Teacher's Manual which you have used in the past in your instructional program and with which you are familiar. If you will be evaluating a book which is new to you, it will be necessary to become familiar with the text as well as the teacher's manual before attempting to respond to the questionnaire.

Beside each of the statements listed below, please indicate the degree to which that particular characteristic is either present or absent from the teacher's manual and/or textbook ranging from almost never (AN), infrequently (I), sometimes (S), frequently (F), almost always (AA).

Some questions will require a categorical response. For those questions, place an X in the appropriate box: Yes, No, or Not Applicable.

Rating Instructions:

Using the Materials Inventory Rating Sheet, go through each category in the questionnaire and total the number of responses each choice received. For example, if in the Teacher's Manual category the

column labeled "Not Applicable" was checked three times, record a 3 in the square provided in the rating sheet under "Not Applicable." If the "Yes" column in this category was checked five times, record a 5 in the square under Yes in the rating sheet, etc.

When you complete recording the number of responses in the Teacher's Manual category on the rating sheet, continue with the next category, Student Text, in the same manner until you have completed all categories. Once you have completed recording the number of responses in each of the squares for each of the categories, follow the instructions below:

1 - Multiply the number in each box which you have just inserted times the number in parenthesis above each column.

2 - Do this for each of the columns for that particular category.

3 - Add the products across the columns and record this total on the last column labeled "Composite Score for Category."

4 - Repeat this procedure for each of the categories.

5 - Add the composite scores for each category and record this total in the square labeled "Composite Score Book."

6 - On the squares below each column on the bottom of the rating sheet, total the number of responses each choice received.

Once the rating sheet is completed, the strengths and weaknesses of the book will be identified in terms of specific categories as well as overall adequacy.

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MATERIALS ANALYSIS INVENTORY

CATEGORY CHARACTERISTICS

TITLE OF MATERIAL	AUTHORS, PUBLISHERS DATE OF PUBLICATION	LEVEL (Grade or Skills)	LANGUAGE(S) (Students' Texts

CATEGORY	* N.A.	Yes	No	Almost Never 1	Infrequently 2	Sometimes 3	Frequently 4	Almost Always 5
I. Teacher's Manual								
CHARACTERISTIC								
A. Provides a clear overview of concepts and skills to be developed in each unit.								
B. Reproduces the student text adjacent to the instructions for the teacher for each individual lesson.								
C. Provides background information for teachers.								
D. Provides sample lesson plan.								
E. Provides strategies for evaluation of student achievement.								
F. Presents common student difficulties as well as useful teaching ideas.								
G. Delineates preparation for and the steps of the directed lessons and guided practice, including the following:								
1) Clearly stated lesson objectives								
2) lists of materials needed for each lesson								
3) procedures for vocabulary development to provide comprehensive input								
4) hands-on activities for development of concepts								
5) a variety of modalities included in the activities								
6) activities appropriate to meet various ability levels within a classroom								
7) suggestions for development of higher level thinking skills								
8) copies of supplementary written materials with answer keys (such as worksheets, tests, diagrams, so the teacher needs only the one guide)								
H. Includes an outline of text scope and sequence.								
I. Includes cultural highlights to expand understanding								
J. Includes alternative reteaching strategies to meet individual needs.								

* Not applicable

CATEGORY	N.A.	Yes	No	Almost Never 1	Infrequently 2	Sometimes 3	Frequently 4	Almost Always 5
II Student Text								
CHARACTERISTIC								
A. is attractive and colorful with many pictures (photos), diagrams, and graphs to aid in vocabulary and concept development								
B. contains a glossary								
C. contains an index								
D. uses a reading level and vocabulary appropriate to the grade level (has a controlled vocabulary)								
E. use of idiomatic expressions								
F. provides contextual clues for new or difficult vocabulary								
G. introduces only one major concept in a lesson								
H. includes suggestions at the end of each unit for further independent investigation at varying levels of difficulty								
I. emphasizes hands-on approach to teaching concepts								
J. provides manipulatives needed to implement hands-on activities and/or to develop needed vocabulary (workbook)								
K. provides manipulatives which are not costly or difficult to replace								
L. provides for the teaching of skills and concepts included in the Curriculum Framework at corresponding grade levels								
III Cultural Relevance								
Do the people portrayed in the text reflect appropriately the cultural values of the student population for whom the book is intended as it related to:								
A. the young vs. the elders,								
B. boys vs. girls,								
C. self vs. group,								
D. intergroup vs. outgroup/s,								
E. family unit, i.e., nuclear vs. extended,								
F. goals and aspirations of the group,								
G. attitudes toward the subject matter being taught,								
H. attitudes toward learning.								
IV Individualized Instructional Aspects								
A. Is the material presented at a level appropriate for the intended student population as it relates to:								
1) reading level,								
2) developmental level (cognitive)								
B. Are there provisions for different ability levels using the same material?								

CATEGORY	N.A.	Yes	No	1 Almost Never	2 Infrequently	3 Sometimes	4 Frequently	5 Almost Always
C. Includes enrichment activities to encourage language development								
D. Students' own experiences are used to facilitate understanding.								
V Content and Presentation of Materials								
A. Is the content accurate?								
B. Does the material include activities for:								
1) introduction,								
2) presentation,								
3) reinforcement,								
4) summary,								
5) evaluation of learning activities (questions at the end of the chapter).								
VI Teaching Activities								
A. Is sufficient information given for adequate preparation of teaching activities?								
B. Would teacher be able to use these materials adequately with the information provided?								
C. Is the information provided clear? Is content of teaching activities comprehensive to the beginning teacher?								
D. Are units of instruction organized in a coherent sequence?								
E. Are suggestions for introducing activity and steps for completing it included?								
F. Does the material include activities (or can they easily be adapted) for:								
1) large group instruction,								
2) small group instruction,								
3) learning centers,								
4) independent work.								
VII Skills and Concepts Taught by the Material								
A. Does presentation of skills and concepts follow a sequential development, i.e.:								
1) Does lesson/chapter begin with a quick review of previously learned material?								
2) Does content development include assessment of student learning and feedback to students?								
3) Does the material provide for guided group practice?								
4) Do seatwork assignments emphasize practice, review, extension, and overlearning vs. new learning?								
B. When content to be taught is complex, is material separated into smaller amounts and shorter sequence?								
C. Is material at a level of difficulty at which students will have a high rate of success?								
D. Includes thinking skill development in each lesson?								

CATEGORY	N.A.	Yes	No	Almost Never 1	Infrequently 2	Sometimes 3	Frequently 4	Almost Always 5
VIII Language Development								
Emphasizes language development, specifically:								
A. Listening								
1. Includes discrimination exercises, such as minimal-pair drill, that allows students to distinguish between and among sounds;								
2. Includes drills that enable students to listen to sentences for meaning so that students can perceive oral messages;								
3. Includes drills that enhance auditory memory such as oral reading, dictation, recitation and question and answer practice;								
B. Reading								
1. Provides exercises for reading aloud in phrases and breath groups, rather than isolated entities;								
2. Includes drills for reading for fluency instead of translation;								
3. Provides exercises for reading comprehension, for message, not code.								
C. Speaking								
1. Includes exercises that emphasize activities that will enhance students' facility in oral expression such as dialogs pattern drills, memorization of rules, verb endings, vocabulary, etc.;								
2. Provides for sequencing of oral activities in such a way that students are usually asked to respond only to the stimuli for which they have been sufficiently prepared;								
3. Provides exercises that identify the differences between the native language and the target language in pronunciation (contrastive analysis);								
4. Includes exercises that encourages students to use language to communicate in class.								
D. Writing								
1. Provides for sequencing of writing activities such as:								
a) copying text								
b) writing from dictation								
c) sentence completion								
d) answering questions in writing								
e) originating written questions and answers								
f) writing summaries								
2. Includes exercises for creative writing.								

CATEGORY	N.A.	Yes	No	Almost Never 1	Infrequently 2	Sometimes 3	Frequently 4	Almost Always 5
IX Critical Thinking Skills Does the text/material emphasize: knowledge: terms, facts, concepts, principles;								
comprehension: elicits understanding of facts, principles, and concepts through exercises which require interpretation, inferencing, estimation of future consequences implied in the data;								
application: elicits the application of concepts and principles to new situations through specific exercises designed for this purpose;								
analysis: -elicits the breakdown of material into its component parts so that the organization structure can be understood stood, i.e., identification of parts, analysis of the relationship between parts, recognition of the organizational principles involved;								
-prompts students to recognize unstated assumptions, logical fallacies in reasoning, distinguishing between facts/inferences by way of specific exercises designed for this purpose;								
-encourages students to evaluate the relevance of data by constructing questions that require this type of strategy;								
synthesis: elicits the integration of learning from different areas into a plan for solving a problem, i.e., case study problems;								
evaluation: elicits judgements based on definite criteria for a given purpose.								
X Illustration A. Are illustrations provided in textbook?								
B. Are illustrations and examples short, to the point, concrete, and relevant to the background of students?								
C. Do illustrations enhance student comprehension of concept taugh?								

CATEGORY	N.A.	Yes	No	Almost Never 1	Infrequently 2	Sometimes 3	Frequently 4	Almost Always 5
XI Supplementary Materials and Resources								
A. Are supplementary publications and other printed matter suggested in the textbook and/or teacher's manual?								
B. Are audio-visual materials suggested?								
C. Does the textbook include a bibliography of reference sources?								
D. Are practice materials provided such as								
1) workbooks								
2) workbook blackline masters								
E. Are testing materials provided such as								
1) Unit tests								
2) Mid-year test								
3) End-year test								

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